



HURRICANE MITCH RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE

**USAID/Nicaragua
Hurricane Mitch
Reconstruction Program**

<i>(U.S. Millions of Dollars)</i>	<i>\$103.6</i>
<i>Public Health</i>	<i>30.6</i>
<i>Economic Reactivation</i>	<i>53.5</i>
<i>Disaster Mitigation</i>	<i>6.6</i>
<i>Education</i>	<i>4.5</i>
<i>Municipal Infrastructure</i>	<i>2.9</i>
<i>Transparency and Accountability</i>	<i>1.0</i>
<i>Food Aid</i>	<i>4.5</i>



Departments of Nicaragua
Affected by Hurricane Mitch

USAID FINANCES LIFE-SAVING RADIO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Jinotega, Nicaragua—Yader Jose Garcia, a month-and-a half-year-old infant, lay in a hospital crib, struggling to breathe, while his mother unwaveringly held a vaporizer to his tiny face to help him. Doctors report that Yader, suffering from pneumonia, is now stable and recovering. If this had happened to a child a few months ago, the child probably wouldn't have been able to get to a hospital and would have died.

Yader was saved by a radio recently installed in the health post of Los Alpes, a remote community located in the mountains of the department of Jinotega. In fact, that same day, May 29, 2001, the radio helped save the lives of two others. When Yader was brought to the health post by his mother, the doctor and nurse assigned there realized that Yader needed to be hospitalized. The



Nurse Blanca Martinez says she uses the radio in the Asturias health center, part of a \$300,000 communication system financed by USAID, for consultations with other medical personnel and for emergencies.

radio allowed them to communicate with the emergency room of the Victoria Motta Hospital in Jinotega to dispatch an ambulance. Just after the ambulance left Los Alpes, another child, Eydy Mariluz Lopez, arrived at the post with the same symptoms as Yader. Nurse Flavia Zeledon quickly contacted the ambulance by radio to come back and pick up Eydy. On the way to the hospital in Jinotega the ambulance made one more stop at the Asturias health center after being radioed by nurse Blanca Martinez to pick up Susana Meza, who needed an emergency caesarean.

“They would have died, if we didn't have the radio,” said nurse Zeledon, unequivocally.

The radio installed in Los



Medical staff were able to save Yader Jose's life by radioing for an ambulance to take him from his remote community to the departmental hospital.

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USAID FINANCES LIFE-SAVING RADIO...

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Alpes is part of a communication system, financed by USAID, that will provide a vital life-saving link between distant, outlying, health posts and municipal hospitals and ambulances. USAID, through the PROSALUD project,

purchased 218 stationary and mobile radios, six repeaters and 40 solar panels at a cost of \$300,000. This system, when fully operational, will permit rapid, reliable and permanent communication between all of the health centers, hospitals and ambulances in three departments that were heavily affected by Hurricane Mitch. The system will also link into the larger Ministry of Health communication network providing coverage to 77 percent of the country.

Dr. Ninette Palacios Rizo, Ministry of Health director for the Jinotega municipality, reports that since the installation of the radios on March 20 of this year, 17 maternal deaths and three infant deaths were avoided with the rapid communication and transfer of the patients to the hospital.

At the Victoria Motta Hospital in Jinotega, Dr. Bernarda Tinoco said the medical center is receiving a daily average of 50 consultations and about 10 patient transfers using the USAID-funded radio communication system.

“Without the radios, we might have had six maternal deaths and five dead children,” said Los Alpes nurse



Dr. Bernarda Tinoco said the Victoria Motta Hospital receives an average of 50 radio consultations and 10 emergency transfers a day since the USAID-funded radio equipment was installed.

Zeledon.

Zeledon recalls how before, unable to communicate with a hospital or ambulance, she would scrounge the community in search of a vehicle to transport emergency patients. Last year, she remembers desperately looking for a

way to take a woman with a life-threatening complication during the delivery of her baby to the hospital. By the time Zeledon could find transportation, the baby could not be saved.

In the community of Asturias, an emergency delivery had a much happier ending, thanks to the radio system. Susana Meza and her baby are both doing fine after an emergency caesarian was performed at the hospital in Jinotega. And Amparo Torres, a 19-year-old mother in Asturias, who had an emergency breech birth, also credits the safe delivery of her son to the radio.

Said Dr. Tinoco: “Of course the radios have made a difference—we’re saving lives.”



Nurse Flavia Zeledón only sees her three children on weekends when she goes home to Jinotega after spending the week in Los Alpes providing health care to the population. The radio has helped her save lives.

“Without the radios, we might have had six maternal deaths and five dead children.”

Flavia Zeledón, Los Alpes health post nurse, on the benefits of the USAID radio communication system.



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